

Lucy van Tine's Oral Testimonial in Favor of Adoption of the 8th Principle

Posted to the UUFP Community FB page on Sat. May 14

Hi fellow UUFP members and friends! Lucy van Tine here. First of all, I'd like to say that I'm speaking to you today not as chair of the 8th Principle Task Force whose task it is to educate our congregation about the 8th Principle, but rather as a member of the Racial Justice Team's 8th Principle Priority Group and as a plain member of the UUFP.

Those of us at the Town Hall last week heard some good arguments for why we should adopt the proposed 8th Principle. I too spoke at the Town Hall and I'm going to add my voice here on the UUFP Community Facebook page as well, for those who were unable to attend that day.

But first, for people who might still be wondering what the 8th Principle is, let me state it here. The 8th Principle, if our church were to adopt it, would go like this:

We, the members of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Peninsula, covenant to affirm and promote:

Journeying toward spiritual wholeness

By working to build a diverse, multicultural Beloved Community

By our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions within ourselves and our institutions.

Adopting the 8th Principle would mean that our church could call itself an Anti-Racism Congregation similar to the way we call ourselves a Welcoming Congregation for our LGBTQ community and to the way we aspire to be a Green Sanctuary.

These are fraught times for our Black Brown and Indigenous citizens. And as our Black, Brown and Indigenous citizens would remind us, times have been fraught for them ever since European-Americans landed on these shores.

So what to do? Now is not the time to sit it out, to take a pass, to wait until all this anti-racism talk, this systemic racism talk blows over. Now is the time to rise as we are able and join this grass-roots movement. Now is the time to be counted

among those churches in our Association who have declared themselves anti-racism congregations by adopting the 8th Principle.

This isn't the first time in American history that our denomination's congregations have been caught up in controversy about the right of Black Americans to be treated fairly and equally under the law.

Leaving the Universalists aside for the moment, let's look at the Unitarians as our example. In the first half of the 19th century as the abolitionist movement was gaining momentum, Unitarians began joining that movement and adding their voices to the cause of ending enslavement.

Thoreau and Emerson were well-known Unitarians whose bold essays defending the character and integrity of John Brown changed public opinion about his actions and the actions of the brave group of men, both Black and white, who were with him at Harper's Ferry, actions which made plain the federal government's role in perpetuating enslavement.

Countering Thoreau and Emerson however, was the Unitarian Senator John C. Calhoun, perhaps the 19th century's most notorious racist, who directly and richly profited from the stolen lives and stolen labor of Black Americans and who used his considerable ill-gotten power and influence to fight for the continuation of enslavement.

But what did the average Unitarian, folks like you and me from that era, what did they do? Lots of Unitarians began joining Abolitionist Societies. They attended meetings, heard speeches, wrote letters to the editor, lobbied and rallied for abolition. Some also took it to another level, they took physical risks, bravely defying the federal government's Fugitive Slave Act, to help people who had managed to escape enslavement.

Sadly though, the record shows not all Unitarians were on board with the abolitionist movement. Some just didn't want to stir up controversy. It might be bad for business, they said, to take a stand. Better to sit this one out. To lie low. It will all get sorted out in the end, they said. Why stick our necks out?

Do we today want to be on record as having been a church that said no to adopting the Proposed 8th Principle? That said no to taking a public stand against systemic racism? Or do we want to go on record as having been a church that said

YES to a principle held so dear by our Black Caucus, Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism and our BIPOC caucus, DRUUMM. The church that said YES to our commitment to dismantling systemic racism, which until named and called out, will remain an insidious force.

Adoption of the proposed 8th Principle will be coming up for a vote at UUFP on Sunday June 5, right after Sunday services. We'll have two hurdles to jump. We will need 40% of us to show up for the vote in person, by zoom or by absentee ballot AND we will need 2/3 of that group to say yes to adoption.

How we vote on June 5 or even if we are able to summon the will to bring it to a vote by showing up in sufficient numbers, will go down in UUFP history and be a part of Unitarian Universalist history forever. Let's join other churches in our cluster: CVUU in Virginia Beach, First Unitarian of Richmond and Glen Allen, in being on the right side of history with this. Let's show ourselves, our children and generations to come that we acted on our mission to Connect in Love.

Let's adopt the 8th Principle!!! Say YES on June the 5th!

Thank you.